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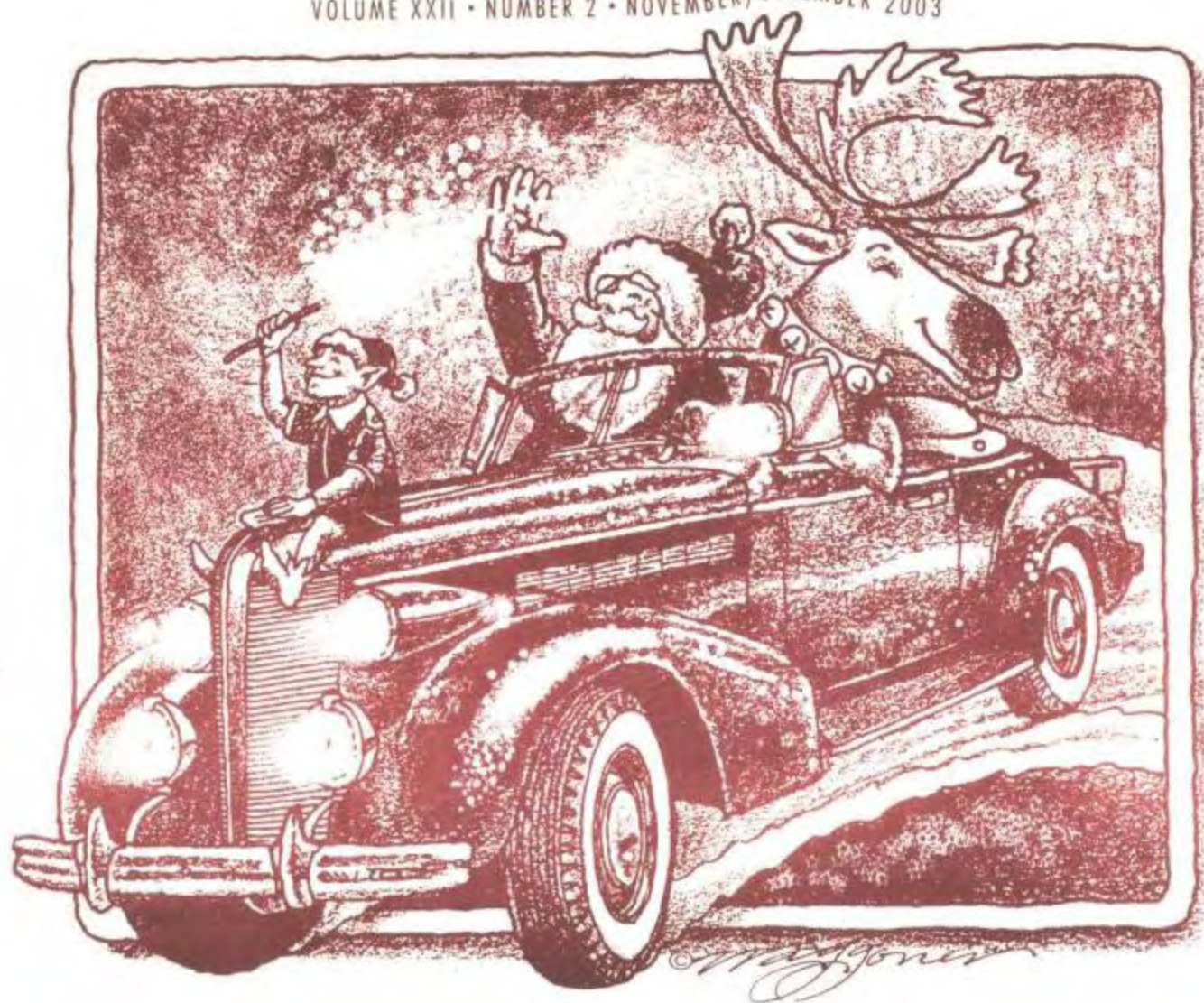
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1937  
*Buick*  
1938

# TORQUE TUBE

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS PUBLICATION  
FOR MEMBERS OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB

VOLUME XXII • NUMBER 2 • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003





# THE 9TH CYLINDER

MARK JORDAN #1297-EDITOR



Founding in 1980 the **TORQUE TUBE** is published every two months for the education and enjoyment of the

## 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB

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Dear Members, I hope you enjoyed my first spin around the block at the wheel of Torque Tube. We had a few typos and glitches but they are being worked out. As an experiment I put together, with Dug Waggoner, the first annual 1937/38 Buick Club 2004 Wall Calendar. It was a last minute idea, and because it was time sensitive, I wasn't able to ask members to send in their favorite photographs. Instead, I went into the Torque Tube archives and dug up images that I thought would be right for a calendar. I then gave them over to Dug who created a beautiful looking calendar by taking the black and white images we had and digitally colorizing them. Many of the images look like works of art.

See the Ad on page 27. You can buy the calendar on line at: "<http://www.cafeshops.com/torquetube>" for \$19.99 plus shipping. If you don't have web access you can mail the club a check for \$19.99 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling and I will send one to you. All of the money made from the calendar will go into the club fund to upgrade the magazine.

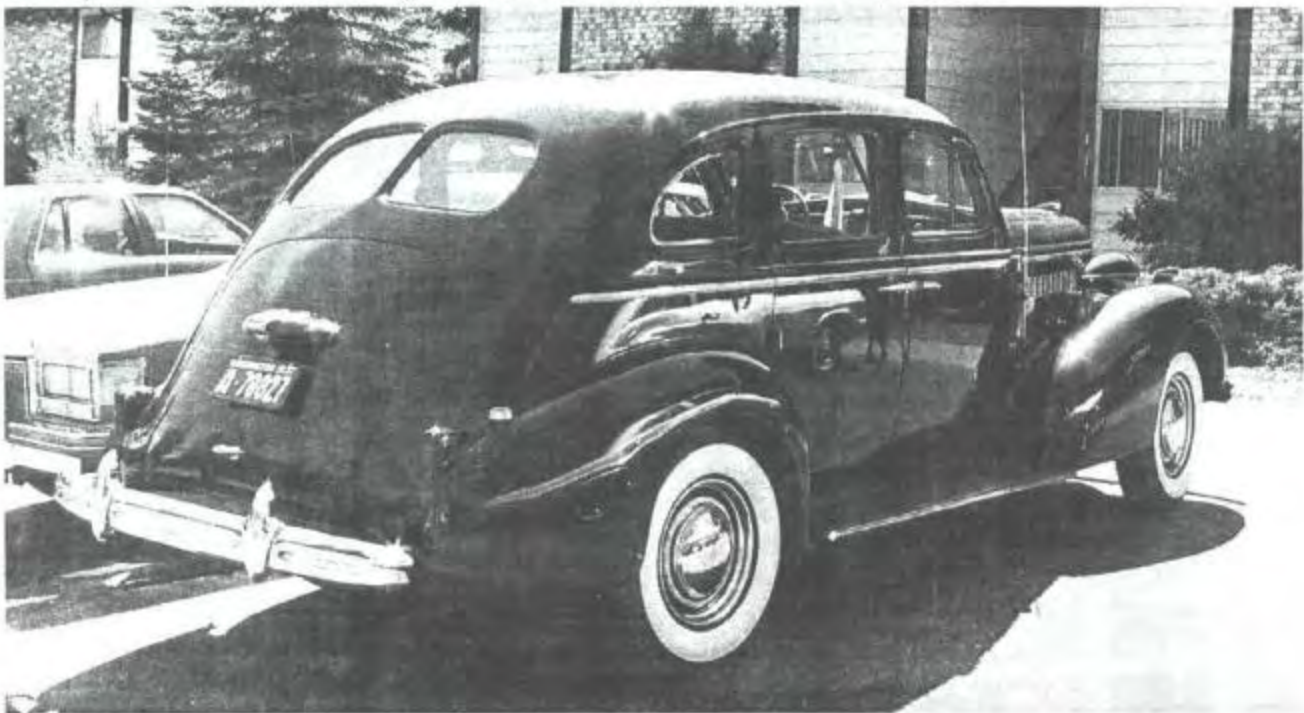
If you like this idea, I want to start to work on a 2005 calendar, but this time I want as many of the club's members to have a say about what goes into it. So, starting in the next year, we will run a photo contest. When you are out driving your car or attending a show try to take some really nice shots. Try to include beautiful backgrounds and maybe pose people that may be standing nearby. If possible, it is always fun to dress up in the fashion of the period of your car and take some shots. You can start sending in your submissions as soon as you want. I'm looking for high-resolution images. You can send me either an 8" X 10" print, high-resolution digital images (on a photo CD), or a negative that I



will return after scanning it in.

In October Dug and I will select the top 12 pictures and put the calendar together. First place will go on the cover and it will be placed on one of the month's pages. The 12 finalists will all receive a free calendar and a free one year subscription to the club.

In the future we will create club tee shirts, hats and mugs for sale on the same web site address to help support and promote the club. If anyone else has any other fun ideas like this, please let me know.



I have heard a few suggestions from members, which I want to pass on. Many of you have requested that we republish some older articles that ran in Torque Tube back in the 1980's and early '90's since many of the new members missed them. This is a great idea and as I get more comfortable in my position I will start to review those issues and republish some articles. Also, if you were wondering where our usually huge "Parts for Sale" section went, it's back. It never really left, but nobody sent

in any big listings for our last issue.

New members **John and Zane Platt** (#1745) recently bought a beautiful 1937 Special 4-door Slant Back Sedan, Model 47. They are very excited about their purchase because the car appears to be in excellent condition with its original paint and license plates. They would like to learn more about the model so if anyone has some specific information you think would help them please feel free to contact them.

**Alan Clark** (#1719) sent this photograph of his Red 1938 coupe (below) in the process of being painted. Alan hopes to have his car on the road by the end of the year. Good luck, Alan and let us know how it's going.

Here is a great shot from **Charles Jekofsky** (#524), possibly for the 2005 calendar.

This plane, the Sentimental Journey, is one of 11 operational B-17's left. It is in part of the







Commemorative Air Force (formerly Confederate Air Force - CAF). The plane made a visit to Roseburg, this summer and he asked to have his car placed next to it for some photos. They said sure, and he left it there a while. Naturally his car attracted as many or if not more people than the plane did. One visitor was so inspired, he went home and returned with his Model A. The lady pictured in the nose art is Betty Grable.

A new member in Canada, **Malcolm Fischer** (#1746), sent me these great photos of his new car.

This 1938 McLaughlin Buick Century 4 door truck back sedan was pulled out of the bushes in High Prairie, Alberta. Because it has been off the



road for 40 years it's going to need a total to-the-rivets restoration. The engine looks to be a '37,





so Malcolm is looking for a '38 engine and is also in the market for the stainless steel trim. For starters, he has found a hood in New York. Look closely at the second picture and note the 3 bullet holes. If we can find the driver of the car at the time those holes were made we may have a good story for the Torque Tube.

On a serious note I received a letter from **Albert Pavlik** (#62). Unfortunately Al had an accident while towing his Model A Roadster to a tour in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The suburban and the trailer turned over and the Model A was damaged. While Al and his wife were, fortunately, not injured seriously, both the Suburban and trailer were totaled. The Model A was worth \$11,500 and sustained about \$11,000 worth of damage.

Sadly, it was only insured for \$10,000. The insurance company offered the \$10,000 but they would also take the car away for salvage. Not wanting to part with the car Al settled for \$7,400 in order to retain the car. The moral of the story is make sure your car is insured for its true worth.

Al urges all members to look at the stated values of their policies and adjust them slightly as your car increases in value so that so you can get back what you put into it.

In this issue we have a story, about **Ken Schmidt**, who loves Buicks solely for the sound of the engines. He runs the **Buick Bonery** in

Sacramento, California which is home to hundreds of Buick with thousands of parts to pick from.

Ken has been a great help to all of our members for over 20 years by supplying parts and giving advice. One of our new members, **Dave Hill** (#1755), recently bought an engine from Ken for his newly purchased 1937 business coupe. Dave has known Ken for 20 years and says he is the nicest guy to deal with. The bottom photo is a picture of Dave's '37 coupe coming off the trailer.







We have another great story in this issue, originally published in Boom Times Magazine, about **Vince Pullara's** (#1433) 1937 convertible. To amend the story, Vince has driven the car to a few Buick national shows including Columbus, Richmond, Buffalo and Kokomo. He recently received a gold award and the longest distance driven in pre-war Buicks at the Kokomo show. He says he enjoyed driving to the Buick's 100th anniversary celebration in Flint, Michigan this past summer, a round trip of 1400 miles.

He encountered no mechanical problems except for a flat tire on the field at the show. Here is a picture of his granddaughter at the wheel. Hopefully she will be a member soon with her own car.

We have a new member to the 1937/38 Buick Club, and probably our youngest. **Harry Logan** (#651) and

his wife Margo just became grandparents on November 1st. The baby's name is Logan and came in behind the wheel at 8 pounds 5 ounces. We think Harry and little Logan look a lot alike.

One of our original '37-'38 Buick Club members,





**Dorothy Anderson (#47)**, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and received a great outpouring of get-well wishes and prayers, particularly from the Mid-eastern group. Recently, she had a slight set back, which resulted in another out-pouring of sympathy.

Since these are too numerous to answer individually she asked if we could publish this note in the Torque Tube to all of you:

*Hi to all our friends  
in the Eastern Division,*

*You can't imagine how deeply you've touched us with your concern, cards and prayers during these recent months. I've had a slight set back but I am coming around the bend again.*

*Karl mentioned this to Marv and as a result our mail has increased. God willing we will see you all in the spring in Ohio. You are all the greatest.*

*Love to all,*

*Dorothy & Karl*

This very interesting 1937 tobacco card, issued by John Player & Sons, was found on ebay.com by **Charles Jekofsky (#524)**. It's number 10 in a set of 50 Motor Cars Collection, Second Series Buick "Empire" Saloon original.

Another ebay item Charles sent me was this photograph. Note the guy on the right is sticking out his tongue. The car looks to be a 1938 Buick Special Model 46C. The seller said the photo was taken around 1938.

**Paul Delucchi (#1246)** sent in this photograph of a 1938 Buick stock car in Australia. It came from the Buick Club of Australia web



site at: <http://www.buickclub.org.au/>. This really is quite an unusual way to drive one of our cars.

In the last issue we referred to a custom '37 Buick that was reminiscent of an Auburn Boat Tail Speedster as a Buick "Y" Job. Well, it turns out I was misinformed.

Well, I hope you enjoy my second issue and be sure to get the new 2004 club calendar you never know, it could become a collectors item.

Happy Holidays,

*Mark*



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TOUR CAR YEAR /MODEL \_\_\_\_\_

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- PYRAMID HILL SCULPTURE PARK # Persons \_\_\_\_\_ @ 7.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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1937 Buick Special Convertible owned by Vince Pullara (#1433)

# 1937 BUICKS

## *Something Special*

By: Bill Anderson/BOOMTIMES Magazine

The 1937 Buicks were introduced about four years after Harlow Curtice was installed as President of Buick. His mission was to restore the once proud Buick's fortunes. By 1933, Buick's sales had dropped to only 46,924 units from 250,116 in 1926. Radical change was necessary and Curtice was up to the task. Personnel were changed; design and manufacturing were focused on producing lighter, smaller cars more in tune with the Depression-era conditions; and Buick was extricated from the ill-fated B.O.P. organization established a few years before. Sales in 1936 (168,596 units) indicated that Curtice was on the right track. However, 1937 was to be even better; it was the year Buick's recovery shifted into second gear.

Curtice challenged engineering and design to produce Buicks for 1937, which provided "better styling, bigger, stronger, and quieter cars, and better value." Buick engineering, under the leadership of Charles Chayne, along with engineers at Fisher Body, responded to this challenge with many innovations. And there were more than 22 separate models in total, up from the 15 offered in 1936.

### STYLING

The stylists also contributed. A longer look was penned with pointed hoods and "fastback" styling on sedans and phaetons which had the roof flowing into the lower body in one smooth line; Buick called this "plain back." This design, coupled with thin horizontal bars in the grille and a smoother front end design, provided a better overall appearance than the 1936 models which had laid the foundation. The common trunk back styling from before was also available.

### MECHANICAL INNOVATIONS

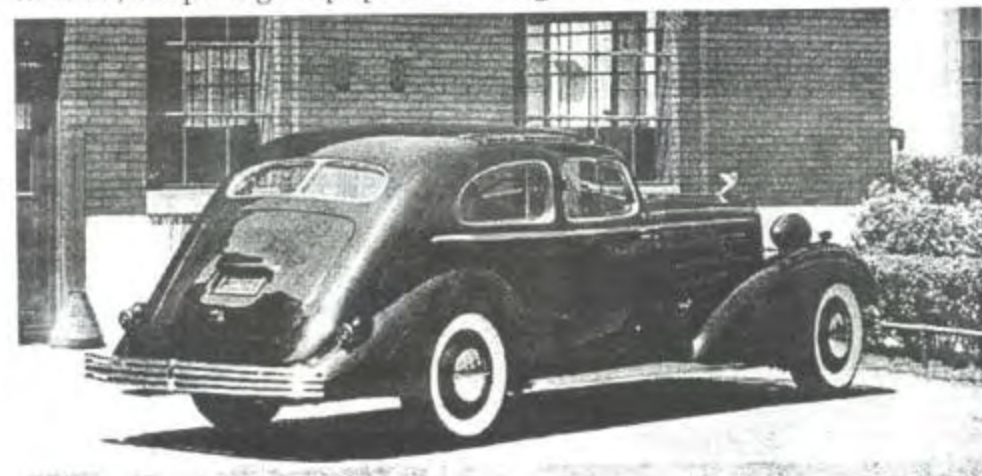
It was the guts of the automobile that set the 1937 Buicks way ahead of their predecessors and provided a benchmark for other brands. The small engine was redone; a new crankshaft, connecting rods and block accompanied an increase in stroke from 3 7/8 in. to 4 1/8 in. resulting in a displacement of 248 cubic inches, a size which continued in use through 1949. The compression ratio was also



increased to 5.7:1 resulting in 100 HP at 3200 rpm. This engine enabled the Series 40 Buicks to accelerate from 10 to 60 mph in 19.2 seconds and achieve a top speed of 90 mph. The larger engines (320 CID) were also improved, enabling the larger series to top 100 mph for the first time. In 1937, a triple digit top speed was a significant

bars were supplied at both the front and rear for better handling. A larger gas tank was provided to increase travel range.

1937 also saw the introduction of all steel bodies on the series 40 and 60 models replacing the wood and steel composite design of before. The all steel body was the result of several years



Cadillac's 1933 Chicago Worlds Fair V-16 Coupe Show Car which introduced fast-back styling

accomplishment achieved by only a very few automobiles.

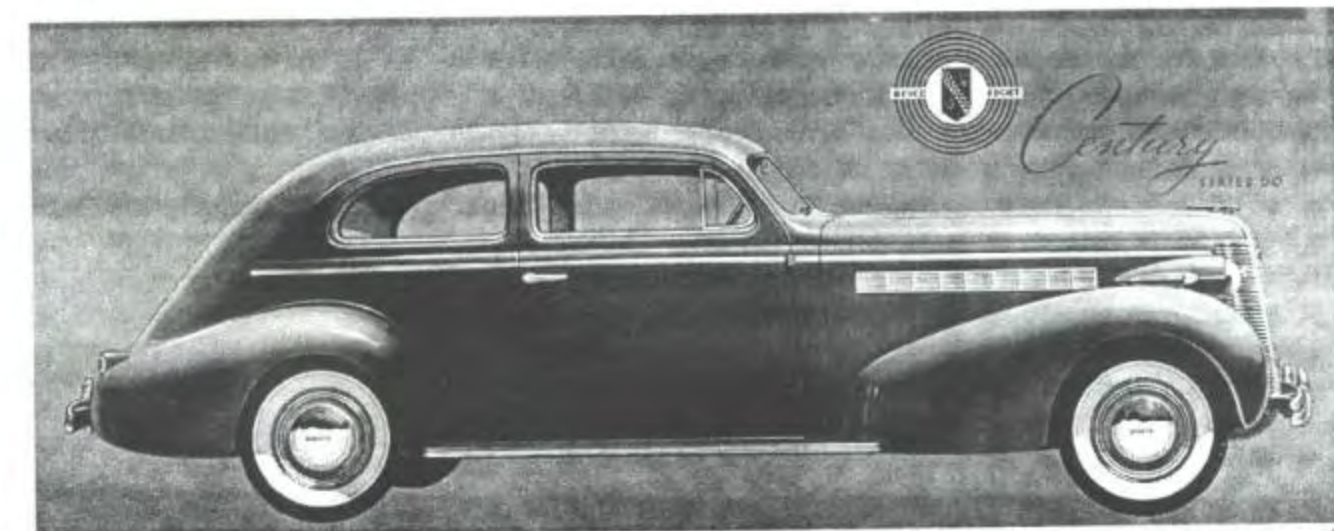
Other refinements in the engine compartment included aluminum rocker arm stands for quieter valve operation, an improved generator, and a thermal circuit breaker in the lighting circuit that eliminated the need for fuses. The 1937 models also had the "Aerobat" carburetor which was a new design enabling smooth, low-speed acceleration, no stalls on rapid stops, and steady performance on any grade.

The chassis used a stiffer I-beam frame. Stabilizer

materials, the stiffer frame, and rubber isolators between the body and frame. However, the series 80 and 90 Roadmasters and Limiteds continued to use the composite body design.

## INTERIORS

Another 1937 innovation was the center-mounted integrated radio and speaker unit, arguably the first time this design was used in any automobile. This unit provided improved audio performance for collaboration of Buick, RCA, Zenith, and Columbia. It was a difficult packaging



1937 Model 61 Century sedan featuring fast-back styling



job and led to redesigned instrument panel style feature that Buick continued for many years. The antenna was also innovative and unique; it was set into both running boards. This was accomplished by mounting the running boards using ceramic-centered rubber insulators and connecting the two with a wire running under the body. Buick also offered an accessory speaker, which was mounted on the cowl to the left of the steering column.

Building upon the clean, elegant design of the instrument panel, the interiors of the 1937 Buicks provided, in the words of Buick, "dignity and refinement" by the use of Bedford cord and mohair fabrics in shades of tan and gray in closed cars with red, blue, green, gray, tan, and black leather in open models. New window molding and trim hardware completed the ambiance.

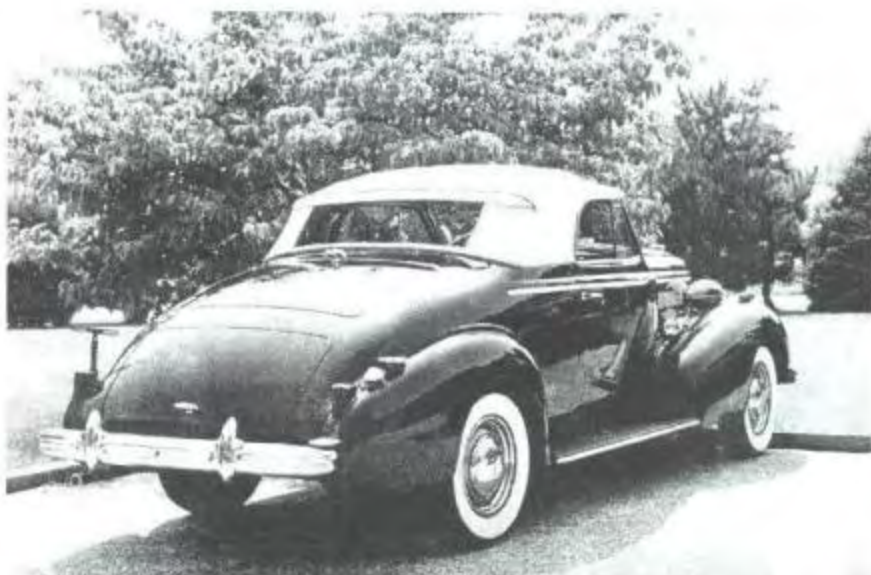
If the wide range of models and colors were not enough to satisfy the varied interests of individual customers, a variety of special models could be had if you or your dealer would ask and also pay a little extra money. Many special paint colors resulted and several Series 40 models were manufactured with Series 90 interior trim.

#### OUR FEATURE CAR

Representing the innovative 1937 Buicks is the Special convertible, Model 46C, owned by **Vince Pullara** (#1433). This car is one of 2399 produced: 2265 for U.S. consumption and 134 for the export market. Vince's car is black with a tan leather interior and a tan top.

It is a car with very interesting history and a story equal to that of Buick in Jack London's *Call of the Wild*. The car was originally purchased by a family in the Boston area who owned it until 1970, at which time it had accumulated only 30,000 miles on its odometer. It had been well cared for and showed only modest wear when noted Buick collector and trader Dick Garbitt acquired the car. While parked on Garbitt's lot, the car suffered the only damage of its life when a garbage truck backed into the driver's side.

Garbitt repainted the dent and sold the car to Ohio Buick collector Len Imke in 1973, who



proceeded to give it another coat of paint. He also re-did the interior, albeit he did not exactly replicate the original; leather was used for the seats, but vinyl, instead of leather, was applied to the door panels. In 1976, **Vince Truant** (#1220) (Lutherville, Maryland) acquired the car while he was living in Milwaukee. He owned it until 1983 during which time he provided the Dante Red wheels on which it rolls, made a number of cosmetic enhancements, and, most significantly, a cleaned suspension and underside. According to Vince (Truant), "I spent four months on my back under that car brushing away all the years' accumulations of grease, dirt, and surface rust, often kept company by my young daughter playing in the rumble seat."

**H**erb Kahn, a stockbroker operating in New York City, acquired the car and took it to his home in Arizona. In the late 1980's Kahn shipped the car to his New Jersey home and shortly thereafter sold it to Jeffrey Levitt, the failing savings and loan titan.

This sale marked the beginning of a dark period in the car's life. Levitt was interested in acquiring, not necessarily protecting what he acquired; albeit he was probably pre-occupied with keeping his savings and loan "house-of-cards" standing. He failed. The car went on the auction block in the liquidation auction that followed Levitt's flame-out and bankruptcy in the early 1990's. Truant tried to reacquire the car at this action, but lost out to Lawrence Rief. By this time, the effects of Levitt's outdoor storage were beginning to show. Rief intended to fix up the car, but instead put it in a warehouse in South



Baltimore where the ravages of neglect continued.

In 1994, Truant acquired the car for the second time. He immediately set about repairing all the damage that had accumulated over the preceding six or so years. Shortly thereafter, the chance to purchase a rare 1940 Limited Phaeton (1 to 7 Model 80C's produced in 1940) arose and Truant concluded that he could not own both. He advertised the '37 Special in the Baltimore Sun. Two prospective purchasers arrived at the Truant home at the same time; one

was Vince Pullara and he was the first up the driveway. A deal was made. It was a bittersweet day for Vince (Truant) as he parted once more with a car on which he had lavished much love and attention.

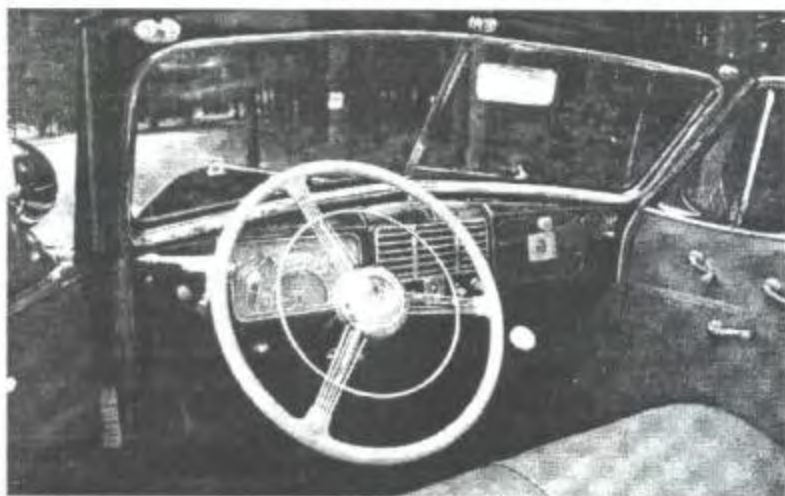
**A**cquisition of the '37 Special by Vince Pullara was both a new chapter in the life of the car and the new owner. Pullara had long collected cars and his garage already hosted a wonderful collection of lost-in-the-fifties 2-door hardtops, including a '50 Chevy BelAir, a '54 Lincoln Capri, a '54 Pontiac Star Chief, and a '54 Plymouth Belvedere. The "new" '37 rekindled an interest in Buicks that Vince originally acquired as a young man helping his uncle with his used car business. Vince's uncle specialized in late '30s and '40s Buicks and Packards. Helping out

around the lot gave Vince the chance to drive and clean a wide variety of these cars — Buicks were his favorites.

Since arriving at the Pullara home, the '37 convertible has continued to benefit from a caring owner. Vince had a new top installed, repaired the steering wheel, and reupholstered the kick panels in the rumble seat. He also made some mechanical repairs to ensure that the car is reliable and pleasurable to drive, as he likes to do now that other family members

have assumed some of the burdens of their shared business, the Chesapeake Press. To keep the '37 Special convertible company, Vince has added other Buicks to his collection, including an AACA First Prize winning 1939 Special Phaeton, which is also black and trimmed in tan, and a blue 1953 Special convertible.

In spite of all the '37 Special convertible has been through in its 66-year life, it has accumulated only 41,000 miles on its odometer. The original front floor mat installed at the factory still covers the floor. Today, the car sparkles much like it did when it left the factory in 1937, but its originality has been altered, arguably for the good, by the repairs and modifications of Imke, Truant, and Pullara. A Silver prize awarded at the 1999 BCA Nationals testifies to its quality.





# THE BUICK GURU

## Ken Schmidt: The Man Who Loves Buicks

By Giancarlo Davis (#1748)

Photos by Mark Jordan (#1297)



One way to describe Ken Schmidt's Buick Bonery in Sacramento is as a small patch of dust, metal and memories. The Bonery is a 3/4-acre parcel of land where the husks and hulls of bygone driving machines lay side-by-side. Most people might deem it a junkyard, but it's really more of a graveyard; a resting ground for old Buicks from the 1930s to 1970s that have reached the end of their road. Most of all, it is an excellent source of material for classic car buffs and street-rodders alike who are looking for sought-after items from windshield-wiper knobs to hoods to entire car carriages.

At first glance many of the vehicles on Schmidt's lot seem like nothing more than rusted exoskeletons. On closer inspection, however, there are a surprising number of usable parts still waiting to be plucked off these vehicles for minimal cost (on a visit three years ago I was able to pull off a hood, fenders and a grille for my 1963 Buick Skylark for a mere \$500.00. All the parts were, incred-

ibly, in excellent condition). It's a lucrative business for Buick aficionado Schmidt, who leads visitors through the lot like a tour guide, describing each vehicle's individual history, value, and available parts.

The old '37, though, represents Schmidt's attitude toward his business: a steely determination to endure in an industry that time seems to be eating away at due to waning public interest in older vehicles. There's only one 1937 Buick on the lot now, and little of what remains of the deteriorated vehicle is of much value to the public. However, owners of '37 and '38 Buicks still depend on Schmidt and his inventory- for their vehicles. Many of those items that collectors seek (some NOS) are stored in a warehouse a few miles from the Bonery, and contain items ranging from grilles to hubcaps to headlight buckets. The rest of the items are stuffed in his garage at home. It appears that the small garage space is stocked with every conceivable accessory a Buick owner could want.



A visit to this garage also serves as respite after a fun day rummaging through the Bonery lot and a good time to glean information from Schmidt about his ideas and contacts in the restoration industry.

Schmidt has been in the restoration business since the 1980s. The ruddy 77-year old retired carpenter has been dealing with classic autos and parts for the better part of 30 years. It all started with the roar of a straight-8 engine in a vehicle racing down a downtown Sacramento thoroughfare. Schmidt followed the vehicle down an alleyway and came across a rebuilt '39 Buick. He purchased one for himself, followed by a 1956 Century.

From this point, he started collecting different kinds of cars from the 30s, 40s and 50s. He found that parting with some of his finds was a rather

lucrative business, and so he entered the swap meet world. He also continued trolling for classics down local streets and boulevards, some of which he purchased right off the driveways of his neighbors. Others were abandoned vehicles he rescued that were bound for the scrap-yard. "One Buick was just sittin' there by the railroad tracks," Schmidt says, "and the windows were all smashed due to kids throwin' railroad spikes at it. It was worth something, I thought, so I brought it here."



*Above is the bare bones of a 1938 sedan. Below shows a 1937 coupe.*



Eventually, Schmidt dealt only with Buicks, a car he adores because of the straight-8 engine some of them have. The first "Bonery" ("I wanted to use something catchy, like 'eatery'", Schmidt remarks) contained perhaps five or six cars, and as the years passed, the business of parting blossomed. Schmidt acquired more and more vehicles (as well as the moniker "Buick Guru"), and transferred from location to location in order to accommodate his growing inventory. Schmidt and his cars finally settled on a large lot in Sacramento 15 years ago and have been there ever since.

The astronomical cost of hauling away metal has much to do with

why the Bonery's 175 cars remain where they are. And Schmidt knows the exact condition, parts and location every car stored there. His memory of lot inventory is impressive. "My memory has to be good — none of what I have out there is on paper!"

Schmidt is still a popular purveyor of parts around the world. Many parts are shipped via mail order to places as distant and exotic as Australia and Zimbabwe. Customers and curiosity seekers alike come from all over the

US and Europe to wander through the Bonery's dirty walkways, marveling at both the businesses' inventory and at its rugged and knowledgeable owner.



Above: A view of one of Ken's lots. Below: A 1941 custom stretch Limo.





*A 1937 Buick Coupe that has been well picked apart.*



*Ken's classic Bonery Hat.*





# Technical TIPS

By Brian Jensen (#1372)

## GET MORE OUT OF YOUR '37-'38 BUICK RADIO!

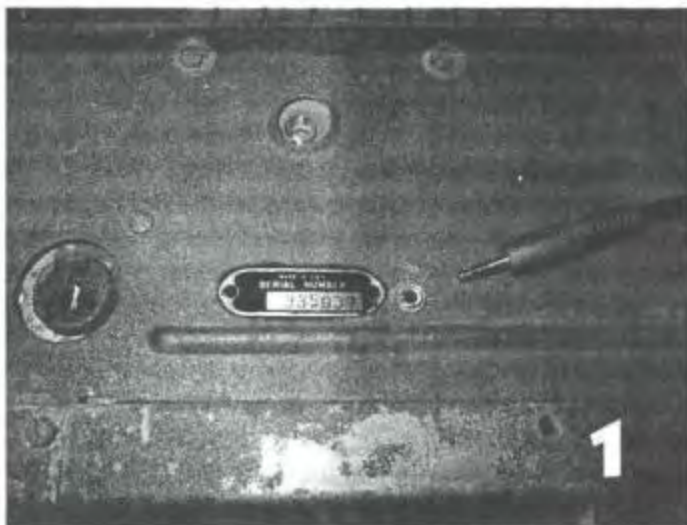
If you're like me with a perfectly operating original Buick Centerline Radio, you're probably frustrated at the precious few number of AM stations worth listening to - music-wise at least! You can carry a portable boom box in the seat to provide appropriate driving music, but that's not quite the same. There are advertisements in vintage car journals stating that they can update your radio to receive both AM and FM, but this usually means gutting the original tube electronics out, and that seems inappropriate too. But, here's a way to hear your favorite tunes from your dash, old or modern, that's relatively easy to do, without ruining the your original radio.

I have a collection of old tube radios about my house and a few of them have a place in back to plug in a record player or short-wave receiver and so make use of the radio's amplifier and speaker. It occurred to me why couldn't this be done on my Buick's radio? I asked a friend who restores amplifiers of vintage jukeboxes and he said, "Yes, just bring me the circuit schematic."

I was able to find the '38 Buick Centerline radio schematic in the "Rider's Radio Manuals" (pgs. 9-76, United Motors Service model 1304873 (980566)). The schematic for the '37 radio is in the installation instructions, available as a reprint. I showed the schematic to my friend, who pointed to a spot and said, "Put an input here across the

volume control. That should work."

I bought a few parts, followed his instructions and put everything together in an evening. It really does work! Now I can plug in a CD or cassette player — or anything with a headphone jack — and hear great traveling music booming from Buick's excellent in-dash speaker, plus I can still use the AM radio as usual. Nothing is changed electronically: the volume and tone controls work the same in either mode. The only addition is a discrete miniature jack installed on the side of the radio's metal case.



Now, the first thing you'll need to do is to remove the radio from the car - probably the hardest task to deal with. All it takes is following the radio installation instructions in reverse, if you have them. If you don't have the instructions, start by removing the knobs and shaft nuts, and unplugging the antenna and power wires. Then loosen the thumbnut on the rear of the case on the radio hanger bracket, swing the hanger away and lower the radio out of the dash.

Next, visit a Radio Shack store and buy a 1/8" stereo miniature jack with a built-in disconnect switch (part # 274-246). You'll want a stereo jack to combine both input channels into mono. The internal switch allows the radio receiver audio to be cut out when the new outside sound source is plugged in. You'll also need a shielded audio cord with male 1/8" stereo plugs on each end, a short



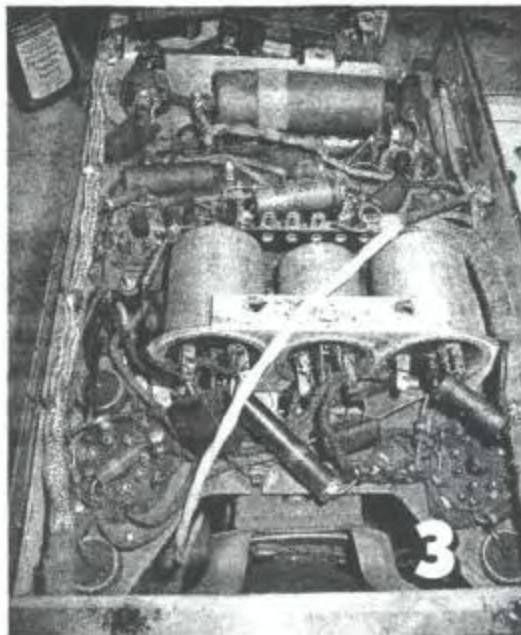
piece (12") of 2 conductor shielded audio wire and some heat-shrink tubing.

Next, solder the 2 conductor audio wire to the jack as shown in *photo #1*.

By following the diagram on the back of the Radio Shack jack package, solder a jumper wire between terminal 2 and 5. Then solder one conductor/wire to terminal 2 and the other to terminal 5. Twist the braided shield into a wire lead, slip on a piece of heat-shrink tubing and solder to terminal 1.

Now, open the bottom of the radio, i.e., the side that exposes the tubes (that faced the floor of the car). Locate a space inside away from any electronic components and carefully drill a 1/4" hole in the side of the case. It would be a good idea to turn the radio over so the metal chips will fall harmlessly out of the case. Clean the hole of any burrs, and install the miniature jack. (*Photo #2 & 3*) Turn the radio over and remove the top of the case (you might want to temporarily place the bottom on to protect the tubes). Fish the audio wire from the jack through from the other side and locate the terminal strip in the very center of the radio chassis running side to side. Find the capacitor (#22 on the schematic) marked

".05 -200" connected on both sides to this strip and cut as close as possible to the terminal: either on the (+) side or the end marked with a black band. Solder one of the wires from the audio wire to this terminal and the other one to the capacitor lead you just cut. You can do like I did and use the unused adjacent termi-



nal on the strip, soldering the audio wire and capacitor to it. If you solder the audio wire directly to the capacitor, tie it down securely to prevent it flopping around. Lastly, twist the braided shield into a wire lead, slip on a piece of heat-shrink tubing and solder this to a place that connects/grounds to the case. It should look like *photo #4 - 5*. Replace the covers and that's it!

When everything is reinstalled back in the dash, see if the radio still works properly. Then, tune the radio off any loud station (some signal will still leak through even with the

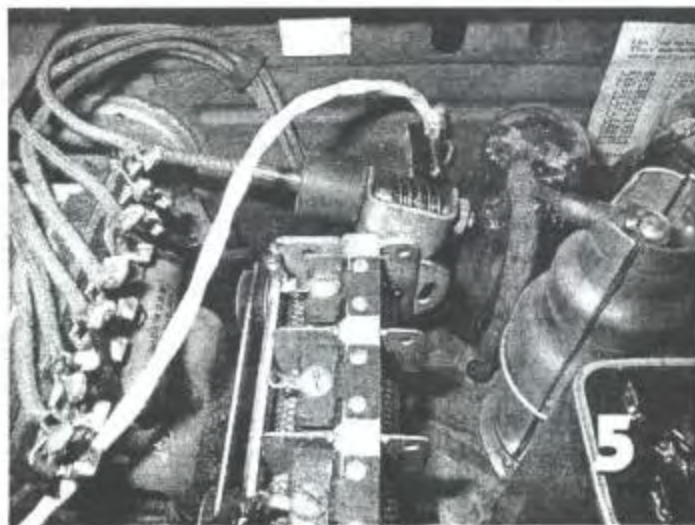
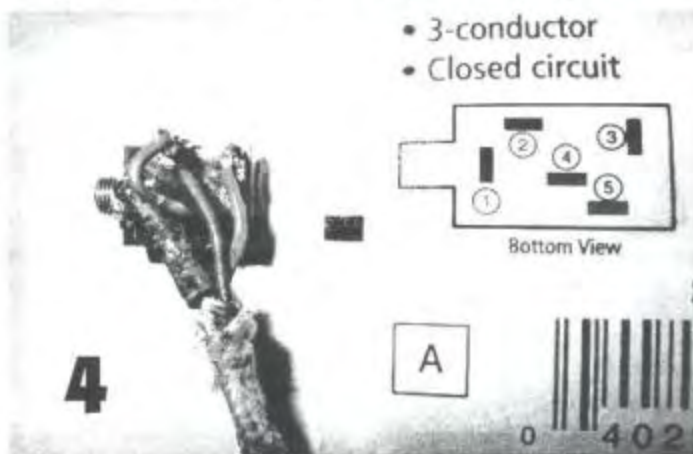
jack disconnect switch), plug the audio cord either to 'Line Out' (preferable) or 'Headphones' on your player and plug the other end in the radio. If using the headphone output, adjust the volume on the player to the loudest setting without creating distortion.

If your radio is working well and the original speaker is in good shape, you should be amazed how good your CD's sound even through 1930's electronics. The Buick Centerline radio was a

high quality set designed for high output and rich sound - even better if you can find and install the Buick accessory under dash speaker! And, of course, if you want to use the AM radio as before, just unplug the audio wire from the side of the case.

With your modern portable player hidden in the glove box, you'll be sure to impress your friends at the next car meet:

**"Man, where's that station on the dial?"**







# Technical TIPS

## KEYS FOR THE GRAY GHOST

By John R. Young (#1579)

When I bought my '38-61 "Gray Ghost", as I call her, the seller lost the keys, but with the switch unlocked, there was no problem. I got two GM key blanks and figured I'd call a locksmith.

We got a key number off the trunk lock and found the old code book still in the parts department, so guess what ...yup! The locksmith cut one key from the number listed in the code book and...drum roll...it fit the trunk, door and the ignition, too! So, we cut the 2nd key and found it even



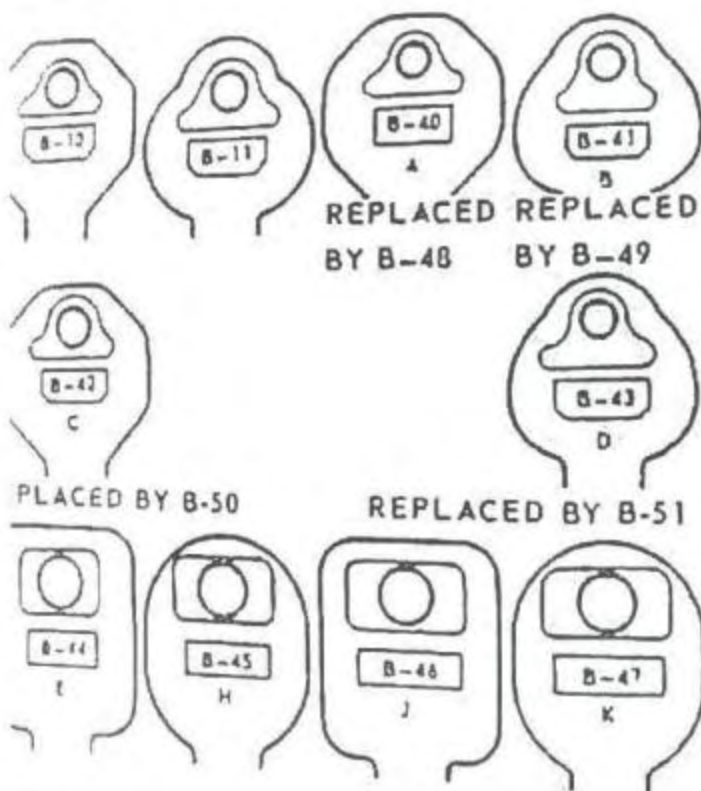
**B10 BLANK**

fit the one side-mount lock we found in the trunk. This was a first for me. If you need keys made just send me the number

and I'll handle the rest.

1938's take a B10 key. The codebook says B10 & B11's will fit Buicks from '35 to '66. Can you imagine? My newest parts guy could not believe we made new keys for a 1938 Buick without having the original key. When I told him, "This ain't no 'Mickey Mouse operation' everybody cracked up."

6



Year	Application	Key
1935-	DOOR & IGNITION	B-10
1966	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-11
1967	DOOR & IGNITION	B-48
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-49
1968	DOOR & IGNITION	B-50
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-51
1969	DOOR & IGNITION	B-44
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-45
1970	DOOR & IGNITION	B-46
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-47
1971	DOOR & IGNITION	B-48
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-49
1972	DOOR & IGNITION	B-50
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-51
1973	DOOR & IGNITION	B-44
	GLOVE & TRUNK	B-45
1974	IGNITION	B-46



M

## KEY BLANK B10, B11

PAGE 11

## 1935-66

## 8800-8999

8800-234355  
8801-253453  
8802-453234  
8803-543222  
8804-224434

8805-344335  
8806-434344  
8807-554355  
8808-245353  
8809-333432

8810-422445  
8811-533232  
8812-233554  
8813-324235  
8814-444242

8815-554424

8850-443343  
8851-533344  
8852-234545  
8853-333532  
8854-433544

8855-554453  
8856-245445  
8857-343433  
8858-455322  
8859-533243

8860-243544  
8861-355343  
8862-423334  
8863-545343  
8864-233424

8865-333435

8900-243535  
8901-343542  
8902-442334  
8903-553334  
8904-212443

8905-354355  
8906-453242  
8907-533433  
8908-224324  
8909-335422

8910-432433  
8911-544322  
8912-243335  
8913-324434  
8914-435342

8915-534335  
8916-234544

8950-443535  
8951-542434  
8952-234332  
8953-333345  
8954-454424

8955-534332  
8956-224245  
8957-355323  
8958-444532  
8959-554324

8960-243453  
8961-323224  
8962-443355  
8963-542232  
8964-243434

8965-355423  
8966-433434  
8967-555345

Lock cylinders contain an imprinted number inside them. We didn't find one on the door handle shaft but did find it on the trunk handle shaft. That's easier than finding it by taking (apart) the ignition switch or glove box lock. That 4-digit number would also have been on the knock-out disc or the tag on the top of the original key (see page 8 of the 1938 Owner's Manual—one of the keys to my other cars, named "Sweetpea," had that tag intact). With that number, a key code can be looked up and a new key made by a locksmith or G.M. dealer with the equipment.



Trunk handle shaft with number



Original Sweetpea key with number

## Editors Note:

My '38 came without keys too and, since I didn't know where to turn, I found another solution. It is not as perfect but it can work when you're in a hurry. First, give a really good locksmith a blank key. Then, have them place it in the cylinder and move it back and forth. When the locksmith pulls out the key, have them look at the key through a magnifying glass. At that point they should be able to see the marking from the tumblers and so, with a file, cut you a new key. It worked for me. The locksmith did a brilliant job!





## Technical TIPS

# POLARIZING A GENERATOR- HOW AND WHY

By Paul Thomas

Republished, with permission, from *Vintage Truck Magazine*, June 2003 issue.

**I** rebuild generators, and the most common questions I am asked about them are: "Do I need to polarize my generator?" and "How do I do that?" As collectible vehicles get older, the more important these questions are.

If you understand how a generator works, you'll know at what point it needs to be polarized and why. So, a little background would be in order.

### HOW A GENERATOR WORKS

In a generator system, the charging cycle starts with the generator. The generator must be able to produce current without any outside help. It does this by storing a small amount of magnetism in its pole shoes.

The pole shoes are made of a soft metal that is easily magnetized and (we hope) retains that magnetism for a long time. When wires or conductors move through this magnetic field, current starts to flow in them. In a generator, those conductors are bundled into a neat package called the armature.

Even if the magnetic field held by the pole shoes is very small - tiny even - current starts to flow in the wires of the armature as it spins through the magnetic field. If we want to increase this flow — and we want to — we need to increase the strength of the magnetic field that these conductors are moving through. Wrapping wires around the pole shoes and sending a current through the wires will increase the magnetism. These field coils, as they are called, are connected to the armature via a commutator and brushes. A small amount of the armature current is routed through the field coils, which creates an electromagnet with the pole shoes being the core. This then becomes a self-energizing cycle. The stronger the electromagnets are, the more current flows through the armature, which makes the electromagnets stronger, and on and on.

### POLARITY

We not only need some magnetism in the pole shoes to start the charging cycle, but also this magnetism must be the correct polarity. Polarity is the direction the north/south poles are aligned in the pole shoes to work with the vehicle's polarity. This alignment or polarity determines the direction current will flow in the system and is determined by your vehicle's electrical system polarity, or which battery post is grounded.

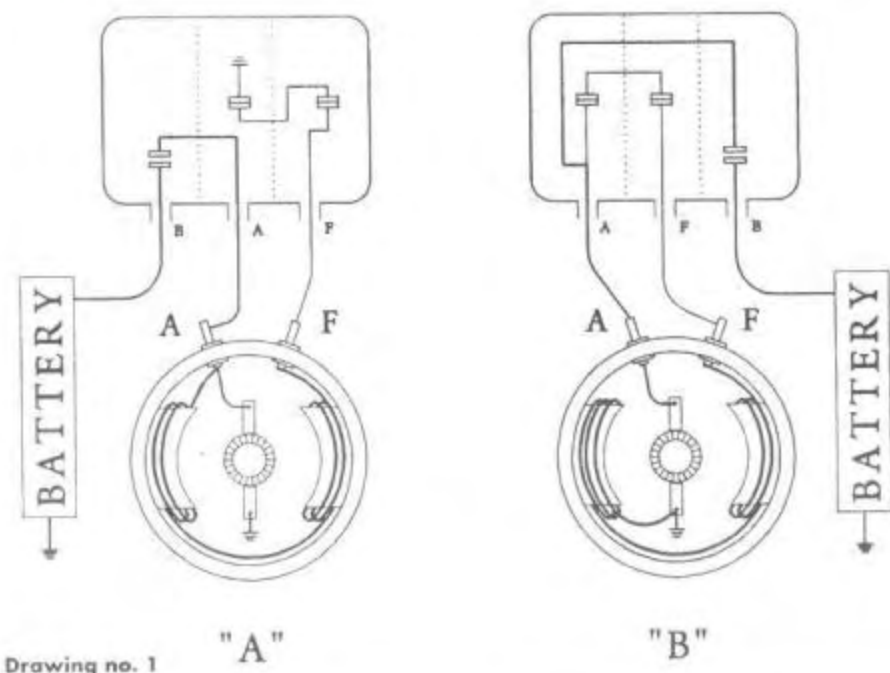
The generator will produce current regardless of which way it flows, but in order for the generator to function on your car, it needs to be told the proper direction to send the charging current. If it charges in the opposite direction of the polarity of your vehicle, the regulator will be damaged almost immediately, and eventually the generator itself will be ruined. We need to "inform" the generator which way to send the charging current by correctly polarizing it.

Correctly polarizing your generator does two things: it restores the little bit of magnetism to the pole shoes and puts it in the proper alignment. This gives the armature something to work with and starts the generating cycle in the proper direction.

Pole shoes, like any magnet, can lose their magnetism through disuse, the passing of time or being jarred. So, anytime the generator has been removed, the regulator has been replaced or the vehicle has not been used for a long period of time, it needs to be polarized. If you install a generator with an unknown ground system on your vehicle, it must be polarized. Polarizing doesn't cost anything, takes a few minutes to accomplish and may save your charging system.



## GENERATOR FIELD CIRCUITS



### FIELD CIRCUITS

The way the field coils are wired inside your generator determines its field circuit type and the correct procedure for polarizing it. Drawing no. 1 illustrates generators with A and B circuits. The circuit fields for type B are grounded inside the generator. In type A the circuits are grounded through the regulator field contacts. For this reason A-circuit generators depend on a good functional regulator.

As a rule of thumb, Delco generators are almost always A circuits, with some B-circuit units found on military applications. Most Ford generators are B circuit except some tractors and industrial units that may be either A or B circuits. Autolite/Prestolite generators are mostly A circuits, though some B-circuit units do exist. By far, you'll find A circuits to be the most common. If you're into European vehicles, Bosch is almost exclusively A circuit, and Lucas almost always B circuit. I've never seen information showing any advantage of one circuit over the other — it's just what the manufacturer chose to use.

What happens if you don't know what field circuit your system is and polarize it as a B circuit when it's an A circuit? If it's performed correctly, nothing will happen

because you haven't completed a circuit and no current flows. Just re-polarize it using the procedure for an A circuit (or vice versa).

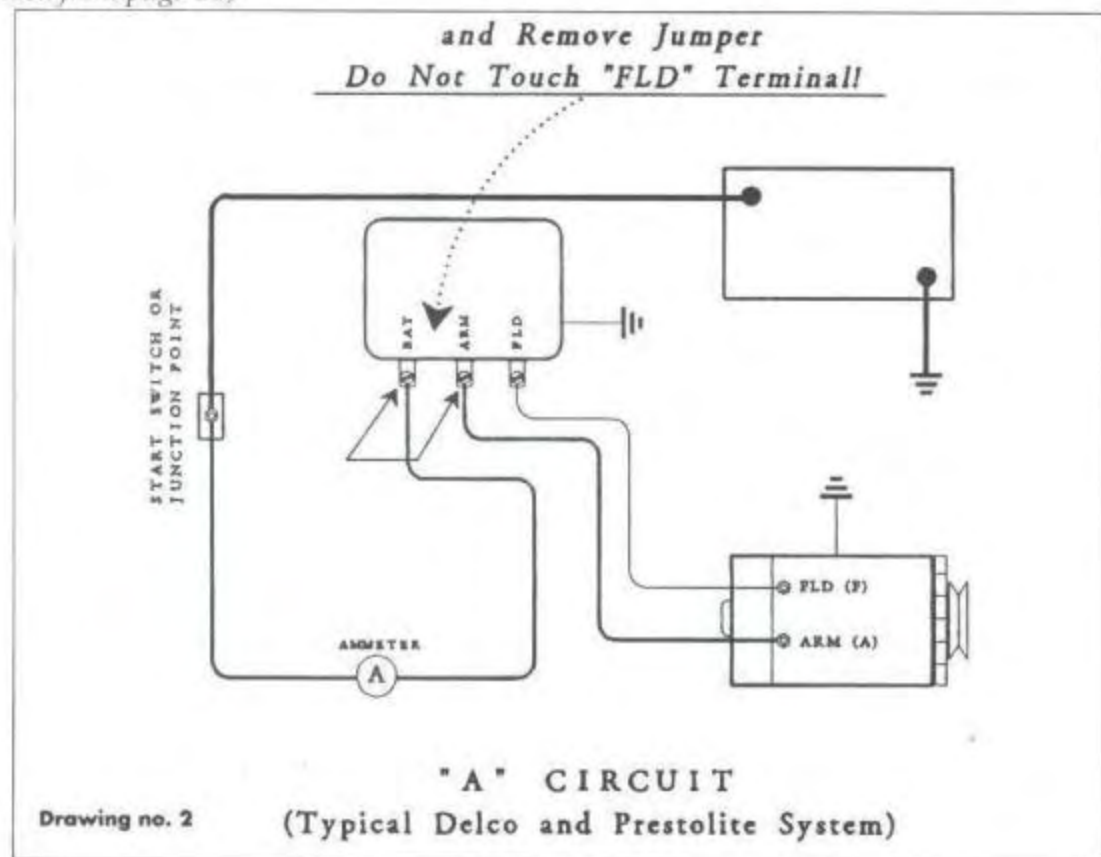
### POLARIZING A GENERATOR

Locate your regulator and make sure you know what terminals you will be working with. Polarizing can be done on your vehicle after the generator and regulator are both completely connected and a good, fully charged battery installed, but before you start the engine.

The procedure is usually done at the regulator, although it can be performed at the generator — it's a matter of the wires between the regulator and generator. Drawing no. 2 and no. 3 both show how everything is tied together in the complete charging system. These drawings represent most typical systems, but be aware that the terminal locations indicated here versus what they're called on your vehicle may be different. Be familiar with the terminals on your vehicle before you start. For instance, on some domestic systems, the "ARM" terminal is called the "GEN" terminal or just "A." The field may be labeled "FLD" or "F." European systems label the "ARM" as "D" or "D+" and "FLD" as "F" or "DF."

To polarize an A circuit (see drawing no. 2)





use a piece of 10-gauge wire and jump between the "BAT" and "ARM" terminals. This is done for a split second by holding a jumper wire on the "ARM" terminal and "scratching" the other end on the "BAT" terminal. If you see a small spark, you know you've made a complete circuit. You can repeat this several times if you're not sure you got that little spark.

If you look at drawing no. 1, you see that you are applying current to one end of the fields and a complete circuit is made through the field points in the regulator to ground. You must have a functional regulator to polarize A circuits. If you're not sure your regulator is good, you can ground the field terminal ("F") at the generator, and repolarize it.

If your generator is a B circuit, you must remove the "FLD" wire (see Drawing no. 3) at the regulator and "scratch" it across the "BAT" terminal. Watch for the small spark that shows you've made a complete circuit. Again, this can be repeated if you need to verify the spark.

If your charging system uses only a cutout, jump across the cutout terminals. When you

connect the "BAT" terminal with the "ARM" terminal for a split second, you should see a small spark.

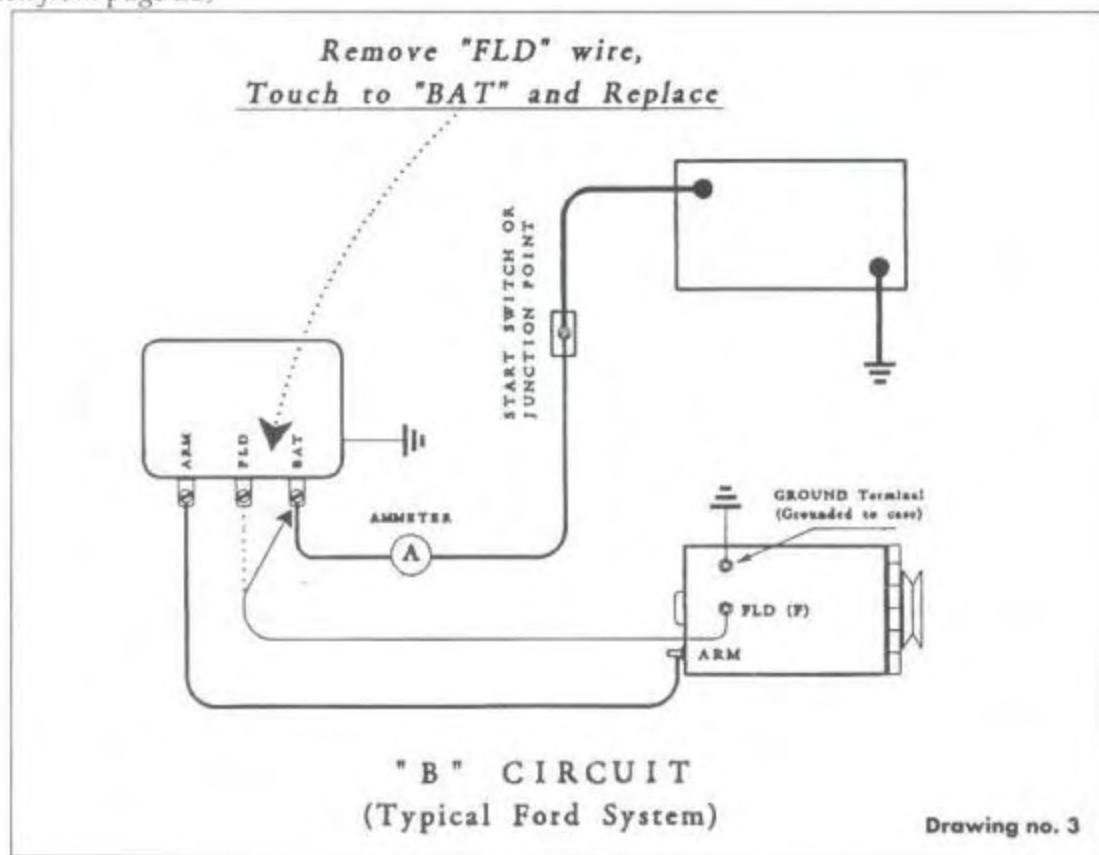
#### SPARK

You should not get a heavy spark that wants to weld the wire to the terminals. If you do, you either have a problem in the system or are using the wrong terminals.

If you get no spark at all, your vehicle may have the opposite circuit, or you may have a broken wire between the regulator and the generator. Using a test light, check for battery voltage at the "BAT" terminal of the regulator. This terminal should have battery voltage all the time. Visually check the wires to make sure they're complete. Try the other method if you are not sure which circuit you have.

These drawings are provided to show typical generator-charging systems; the Buick systems are shown at the end of the article although they both function the same way. Even though there are only two ways to wire field circuits, there are many variations in





terminal locations and what they're labeled. Make sure you're familiar with the terminals and your regulator and generator.

### CUTOUT RELAY

At this point, you might want to remove the regulator or cutout cover and make sure the cutout relay is functioning correctly. Start by locating the cutout relay in your regulator. It will be the heaviest set of points usually located directly behind the "BAT" terminal. Before starting the engine, the points should be open.

Start your engine and watch the points. Did the points close? If not, speed the engine up and they should close when the generator starts to charge. When the rpm drops to the point where the generator cannot produce current, the points should open. If they stay closed, shut the engine off. They must open then, and if they don't, you may have a bad regulator. The cutout points MUST be open with the generator not running. If yours do not open, disconnect the battery ground cable immediately and have the system checked out.

### OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

Some problems will need to be taken to your friendly local auto-electric shop. When customers bring a generator to my shop for reconditioning, I always ask them to bring the regulator also. Other information I need, besides the application, is the voltage and the polarity of the system. Many times parts have been swapped in because they were available and not because they were an original part. Someone might have changed the polarity and/or the voltage of the vehicle. When the regulator and generator are tested as a system, the customer can be sure the regulator is functioning properly and the system will work when installed on the vehicle.

---

*Paul Thomas has worked in the automotive electric field for more than 20 years. He currently owns Hi-Way Automotive Electric in Bunker Hill, West Virginia.*



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37 SS carb. No choke parts .....	75.00

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**Alma, MI 48801**

**989-463-5072**



# *Parts* **WANTED**

## **PARTS WANTED:**

Needed for 1937 Century Convertible Coupe (66C):

Rear license plate mount (attaches to L taillight) or complete left taillight assembly with complete license plate holder.

Rumble seat step and standoff for step as mounted to right rear fender

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Parts interchange manual applicable to this Buick

*Jon B Kanas #1372*

*IBM Global Services*

*715 Vivian*

*Longmont, Colorado 80501*

*Home: 303-678-0658*

*Email: kanas@qadas.com*

*Website: <http://www.qadas.com/~kanas>*

*AOL Instant Messenger ID: KanasColo*

---

## **PARTS WANTED:**

1938 Century tail light lenses and bezels.

320 engine, long block, rebuildable.

Starter and carburetor also needed.

1938 radiator

*Malcolm Fischer*

*sandguys@telus.net*

---

## **PARTS WANTED:**

Restoration parts for a 1937 Buick McLaughlin.

Spot lamp,

Hub caps

Window weather stripping

Front grille

Rubber seal surrounding the gas cap.

*Hiten*

*send2hiten@hotmail.com*

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Sidemounts for '37 or '38 Century

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# Cars FOR SALE

## **1937 MODEL 81 FOR SALE:**

1937 model 81 4door sedan, 65000 miles, black paint, white wall tires and side mounts. Car was purchased first by: Rodney A. Barry of Pomona California, March 17, 1937 from Clark Bros. Pomona California. Frame # 3070270; Engine #83238276; Body #6214; Body job #37-4819; Model 81-6 wheel formal sedan. This car was later purchased by Bob & Marry Reeves of Pomona California (1960's). I purchased the car from them 3-17-70, and drove it here to B.C. since then this car has been stored, but used occasionally. The car is in original condition other than a repaint in 1996.

For more information:

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**1-250-497-5762**

**P.O. Box 197 Okanagan Falls, B.C. Canada V0H-1R0**



# Cars WANTED

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**Thomas Webster, Box 120 Calais, Me. 04619 • (207) 454-7120**

---

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1938 Century Convertible Coupe, Model 66C

Nice original car with older restoration in black or green with brown interior preferred. But all cars of this is of interest. Doesn't have to be a top point car as long as it is original, complete and in good running condition.

**Henrik Hoier #1665**

**Tystrupvej No. 1**

**4250 Fuglebjerg - Denmark**

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---

## **1940 CENTURY WANTED:**

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David Hill (#1755)  
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Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Donald Bowman (#1756)  
10702 Hopewell Rd.  
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Clip Type.....DW-369.....	\$2.75 ft.
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Sedans, 3/4" Wide:	
Ser. 40-60.....TW-371S.....	\$44.50

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Sponge.....TL-369.....	\$2.10 ft.
1/2"x1"x16".....TL-1129.....	\$48.50

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Black.....CB-343BK.....	\$6.75 ea.
Brown.....CB-343BN.....	\$7.25 ea.

## PEDAL FLOOR SEALS; All Models

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Winder Rings.....HE-378.....\$6.00

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MOUNT.....MM-347.....\$52.50 pr.

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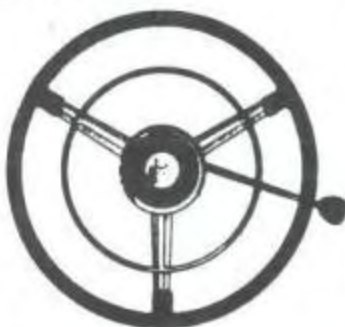
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Dear Members:

We made a mistake in the last issue. It was in the Technical Tips article called "Get more out of your '37-'38 Buick Radio!" The pictures were out of order. If you plan to do this modification follow the directions and relate them to these photos. This is the correct order. Sorry for the mistake.

*Mark Jordan, Editor*



**Replace this information in the 8th paragraph:**

Next, solder the 2 conductor audio wire to the jack as shown in photo #1. By following the diagram on the back of the RadioShack jack package, solder a jumper wire between terminal 2 and 5. Then solder one conductor/wire to terminal 2 and the other to terminal 3. Twist the braided shield into a wire lead, slip on a piece of heat-shrink tubing and solder to terminal 1.





